

LOGNOTE -- Chief, Operations Group, 14 October 1983

1. [ ] Talked with [ ] about a number of matters. [ ] reported that British Telecom is being "privatized" at the direction of the Thatcher government and this has BBC worried. The communications unions are opposed to the move to private ownership and already there has been some industrial action. In particular, BBC is concerned about the circuit out of Nairobi in the event of a communications strike. [ ] will discuss with [ ] the possibility of having the Nairobi file sent to Swaziland (presumably by Telex) and introduced into Autodin at Mbabane. I said I didn't know what kind of burden this might place on [ ] staff but the idea ought to be explored in any case.

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[ ] said he and [ ] were worrying the question of Saudi coverage. I said that I felt the topic was academic at the moment and would remain so until Gulf had had time to rebuild its Arabic staff. I said I was not in favor of the kind of coverage split BBC was proposing: it made things easier for BBC but was highly labor intensive for us. I noted that if we agreed to take more Saudi coverage we might have to decide to begin full coverage of SPA whether or not BBC wanted to give it up. I said I felt we should be thinking of some kind of coverage package we could ask BBC to take over in return for our assumption of full Saudi coverage. [ ] said he agreed, but that they had not been able to think of anything. I said neither had we at this point.

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[ ] is optimistic about [ ] BBC's new chief engineer. I suggested it would be a good idea if [ ] visited Panama Bureau and then came on to Washington for a few days. [ ] said he would mention this to [ ]

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[ ] asked if I was rescheduling my trip for early winter. I said I had March in mind and might ask [ ] to meet me in Nicosia for a short conference on Arab World coverage. I said that if we did this it would be useful to have [ ] come down from London to join us, but not a BBC representative. [ ] thought this would be fine.

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(cc: D/FBIS, C/DRD, C/MOD, C/ED)